

# PUT YOUR OWN-I MEAN, YOUR VERY OWN-HOUSE IN ORDER FIRST

This op-ed on citizen journalism is a lot less offensive than I thought it'd be from reading The Opinionator's take on it. While Professor Hazinski suffers from the same ignorance about how "citizen journalism" gets vetted that most professional journalists do ...

Education, skill and standards are really what make people into trusted professionals. Information without journalistic standards is called gossip.

And while he also suffers from a misguided belief that journalism's existing ethics—the ones that are failing us badly as a society, like so-called "objectivity" created by on-the-one-side-on-the-other-side-but-no-truth Joe Klein style of journalism—ought to be adopted by "citizen journalists" ...

Journalism schools such as mine at the University of Georgia should create mini-courses to certify citizen journalists in proper ethics and procedures, much as volunteer teachers, paramedics and sheriff's auxiliaries are trained and certified.

But at its heart, Hazinski's op-ed calls for something that the Press has been fighting against for over two hundred years—real enforcement of professional journalism's so-called ethics.

The news industry should find some way to monitor and regulate this new trend.

[snip]

There is no licensing, testing, mandatory education or boards of review.

Most other professions do a poor job of self-regulation, but at least they have mechanisms to regulate themselves. Journalists do not.

[snip]

They should clarify and reinforce their own standards and work through trade organizations to enforce national standards so they have real meaning.

While his calls for "regulation" would almost certainly violate the Constitution, I do appreciate his recognition that journalism needs to put its own house in order before its planned demolition of ours.

But I couldn't help by laugh at this line, which suggests Professor Helzinski should be putting his very own house in order before he even starts looking at his colleagues' houses.

False Internet rumors about Sen. Barack Obama attending a radical Muslim school became so widespread that CNN and other news agencies did stories debunking the rumors.

While it's true that CNN debunked the Washington Times story (not an internet rumor) that Obama went to a madrassa, in general, I think this latest champion of standards in journalism doesn't really have a clear idea of what the word "debunk" means. Because last I checked, "other news agencies" were actually propagating that unfounded claim, presenting it as hard-hitting reporting.

Update: William Ockham adds:

I know that what I'm about to say is really picky, but when a journalism prof takes it upon himself to lecture us about the perils of citizen journalism, he's leaving himself open. Associate Professor Hazinski needs to consider hiring a copy editor or proofreader.

Principles are not principals. While I have known many ethical principals, I certainly don't think that "adhering to the principals" should be made mandatory under any circumstances. That would lead to any number of sticky situations in the public schools and elsewhere.

I suppose he's talking about this:

There are commonly accepted ethical principals – two source confirmation of controversial information or the balanced reporting of both sides of a story, for example, but adhering to the principals is voluntary.